

KITCHEN CABINETRY

WITH FIONA SHAKESPEARE

A WELL-PLANNED KITCHEN WILL BE A PLEASURE TO WORK IN AND TO LIVE WITH. MAKE SURE YOU GET THE CABINETRY RIGHT WITH FIONA'S EXPERT ADVICE.



CONSIDER THE LOOK YOU WANT

There are so many styles of kitchens and the cabinetry forms a big part of the overall look and feel of the kitchen and therefore the home. Whether the look is minimalist and modern, glamorous and formal, or industrial with vintage touches, you will need to design your cabinetry to match.

If the kitchen is open plan to the main living area, you might want to have a few warm touches that link the kitchen to the lounge – for example, a Roman blind in a linen fabric or a vintage tribal rug under the kitchen stools.



CONSIDER YOUR NEEDS

When designing your kitchen cabinetry there will be practical and aesthetic considerations. From a practical point of view, it helps to measure out exactly how much storage and bench space you need.

Also think about how you like to use your kitchen – do you like to entertain and invite people to eat in the kitchen? How much of the washing-up and food preparation do you want on display to visitors? Most people want some of the cooking and cleaning mess to be hidden while still having a corner of the bench where visitors can sit and chat while you cook.

CONSIDER THE STORAGE

A common mistake is not planning enough storage. Deep drawers are much better for storing pots and pans, and cupboards to the ceiling are better than having a gap that just collects dust.

Think about the other common items you use daily and make a dedicated drawer, for example, office supplies, hardware basics, first-aid items.

The best kitchens I've seen have a nook or corner that doubles as a work station for a laptop and charging devices. This means everyday items like piles of bills, stationery, notes etc have a safe place that's also out of sight.



CONSULT A DESIGNER AND CUSTOMISATION

A professional kitchen designer can help you make the most of the space you have and fit it to the way your family lives. Not only will they have up-to-the-minute information on the newest products, they will also have the expertise to know what will work and be able to suggest things you might not have thought of.

If you want your kitchen to function in a certain way but can't find a design that fits perfectly, think about having custom cabinetry solutions designed for you. Do your research and put together a scrapbook of clever customised ideas you can copy. For example, a custom stainless drainboard installed behind the sink instead of alongside it frees up the area on either side. A recessed backsplash built into a counter but taller than it, conceals the work area from guests but is still visually pleasing for guests on the other side.

CONSIDER LIGHTING

The kitchen is one room where you can't afford to have poor lighting. Rooms generally need three types of lighting: general lighting for overall illumination, task lighting and accent lighting. In the kitchen, make sure each work area has the light it needs and consider using under-cabinet lighting to ensure that the counters have sufficient lighting for common kitchen tasks. It's also a good idea to have lights on different switches so you don't have to have them all on at once if not needed.

A feature pendant light or a series of mini-pendants will enhance the beauty of the kitchen and link it to the lounge or dining decor in an open-plan house.

CONSIDER THE LAYOUT

The layout is very important to get right. If you're having an island, make sure it's an adequate size. Allow at least 1.5m long and 90cm deep but ideally bigger is better, but not so big that you can't reach across to grab plates and glasses.

Don't forget the layout golden rule, or the Kitchen Triangle made up of the sink, stove and refrigerator. As this is where the greatest activity takes place in a kitchen, it requires unobstructed access. Regardless of your kitchen's layout (L-shaped, galley, U-shaped or island), the sum of all the distances in a work triangle should not be less than 3 metres or greater than 7.5m so there is adequate room to move quickly but so don't have to take more steps than necessary.

A good rule of thumb is to allow paths through a kitchen at least 90cm wide. Paths within the cooking zone should be about 1.2 metres wide.

Make sure you have plenty of power points and possibly a dedicated nook or drawer for charging devices.

SHORTCUTS

TOP TIPS

Choose a maximum of two or three finishes or colours for your overall kitchen design including cabinetry; for example, lower cabinets could be the same colour as your floor, for example timber, the benchtops and splashback a second colour, marble for example, and the higher cabinets a third colour, perhaps white polyurethane.

FAVOURITE TREND

I love dark timber floors and black cabinetry on the island with pale timber or pale grey cabinetry everywhere else. I also love the 'gold' / brass taps available now because they make a beautiful focal point in a kitchen.

TOP SURFACE FINISHES

For cabinets I love timber veneer and painted finishes in pale grey. For benchtops I prefer marble and stainless steel.

OPEN SHELVES OR CUPBOARDS?

For me, definitely cupboards – that Wiggles cup will always be visible or box of Band-aids will always find its way onto the display shelves, so let's close the door on them.

